

Musical Art Society Passes and Art World Loses One of Its Most Beneficent Agencies

After 26 Years of Activity
Goes Out of Existence for
Lack of Support.

By W. J. HENDERSON.

UNDER date of November 20 the subscribers to the Musical Art Society received from the secretary, John S. Sheppard, a communication which must have given them no small pain. The letter may now be made public and its content will cause general regret. Mr. Sheppard wrote as follows:

"The Musical Art Society of New York has decided to discontinue its concerts for the present. The cessation of these concerts will doubtless be regretted by the faithful supporters of the society. In the sixty concerts given since its organization, in 1893, the programmes have included the best compositions for chorus a capella and the choir of the society has justly attained a national reputation. The society has inspired the organization of scores of similar societies throughout the country. The publication under the auspices of the society of the works of the old Flemish and Italian schools of polyphonic music, much of which had theretofore been neglected, has spread the knowledge of and interest in this form of musical art.

"In ceasing its public activities, however, the society does not intend to relinquish its efforts to encourage the culture of choral singing as an art. In accordance with the deed of gift covering the endowment fund raised by the late president of the society, Mr. Eugene Delano, this fund now passes to the trustees of the Institute of Musical Art. It is hoped and believed that the Institute of Musical Art will cooperate with the Musical Art Society in the furtherance of its plans to promote the art of choral singing. It has been suggested that the Institute of Musical Art establish a department for the training of choir singing in which singers will receive instruction in sight singing, rhythmic, phrasing, diction, expression and in all things necessary to choral singing. It is believed that such training will ultimately develop a chorus capable of performing the most exacting choral works in the highest artistic manner.

The passing of the Musical Art Society removes from the art world of New York one of its most beneficent agencies. The story of the end is only half told in the secretary's letter. The simple facts are that after activities lasting twenty-six years the organization has gone out of existence for want of public support.

In the beginning the society enjoyed a considerable patronage. Its concerts were attended by the most cultured music lovers in the city, and they commanded a sufficient degree of general attention to bring to them many listeners of the class set off as possessing social distinction. But during the last ten years it has been the life of this city that the days of the Musical Art Society were numbered.

The end had to come, not because of lack of musical material, nor because of the undeniable deterioration in the quality of the choir of the society. There was abundant music of the kind in which this body specialized. Singers were not difficult to obtain, provided they could be properly paid for their services. The conductor, Dr. Frank Damrosch, had lost none of the enthusiasm and devotion which led him to found the choir.

Decline in Public Taste.

The disintegration of this organization is due above all things to the steady and lamentable decline in public taste which has been an indisputable part of the musical history of this town in the last dozen years. Never in its existence did New York have such a plethora of musical entertainment. Never were there so many music lovers. Never was there so little acquaintance with the essential of fine art. Never was there such a demand for cheap sensationalism and the exhibition of personality.

It is not germane to the purpose of the moment to discuss the causes of this descent, nor indeed could any good be accomplished by such a procedure. The damage is done and it cannot be undone. The agencies which work the largest harm to the cause of true musical art in this town are too strongly entrenched in the general public favor to lose one jot of their influence.

The sincerest music lovers may be grieved that there is still a sound and discriminating musical public sufficiently large to provide the concerts of the Flonaxley Quartet, the Philadelphia Orchestra and similar organizations with paying audiences numerous enough to occupy all the seats. This same discriminating musical public leaves thousands of tickets for concerts unutilized to it to be distributed freely among the youth of the financial district and the students in the conservatories.

The position of the Musical Art Society was unique. Its choir was composed of paid professional singers. Its object was to present to the general public the masterpieces of the early composers of unaccompanied vocal music, most of which belong to the treasury of the Roman Catholic Church. The secular



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songs of such masters were embraced in the liberal scheme, and to these were added part songs, either sacred or worldly, of modern writers. Instrumental music appeared often on the programmes. Compositions of Bach and other writers of music not for the inexperienced were given as interludes between the two parts of the vocal programme. The concerts cost money. For a time this money was forthcoming; but toward the end it began to look as if only the members of the society would furnish the requisite pecuniary foundation. Eugene Delano, president of the Musical Art, set out to raise \$100,000. He died before his purpose was accomplished. What he had obtained was sufficient to finance the concerts. The question then was whether the directors should continue to go around, hat in hand, or to retire from the field.

Future of Choral Singers.

In view of the fact that enormous demands are now made on patrons of musical activities for funds to support great orchestras it seemed unlikely that anything could be done for the Musical Art. The income from the incomplete endowment fund will be applied to training chorists at the Institute of Musical Art, a conservatory which already has all the necessary machinery in operation.

Just what these choral singers are going to do cannot well be told. This is not a prosperous period for choral music. The population of New York is composed of heterogeneous elements, almost none of which has been nurtured on choral music. The school of the future for opera, next to virtuoso performance (but only of the highest type), and third for orchestral music. A small percentage of the people of the city love the most pure and chaste forms of chamber music.

The Oratorio Society makes no attempt to supply the kind of programmes sung by the Musical Art Society. The Schola Cantorum enters into the field, but its achievements are bound to differ in some measure by reason of the difference in the constitution of the two choirs. Pietro Ton has a small choir which specializes in church music of the Roman type, but is rarely heard in the concert hall. The Russian cathedral choir emerges from the sanctuary at intervals and reveals the splendors of the northern worship canticles. The choir of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine has once performed a similar office for the treasures of the English church.

The cessation of the work of such an agency for good as the Musical Art Society could never be more deplorable than at the present time. The rise of sensationalism to supremacy began early in the history of music, and there has always been need of some combating force, something to keep the noblest architectural forms of the total art before the public.

At this day we are almost smothered under orchestral concerts. In the coming week, for example, there will be seven in four days. But no one who is awake to his surroundings can be misled into the fancy that the numerous auditions go on to hear the great works of the composers, nor do public spirited citizens subscribe guarantee funds to support impersonal orchestras. The audiences and the guarantors alike are for the most part absorbed in the personalities of prima donna conductors.

The virtuoso of the baton can achieve no conquests with the "Improperia" of Palestrina or the "Peregrine facta sunt" of Michael Haydn. That is perhaps one reason why such an organization as the Musical Art Society retires from the field. The condition is not encouraging for the most part absorbed in the personalities of prima donna conductors. Possibly in the course of

Mr. Kreisler, Mr. Martinelli and Miss Rosa Ponselle.

The programmes for the two concerts of the Philharmonic Society this week are: Thursday evening—Bach, Brandenburg Concerto in F (Mott), aria based on organ prelude, "O Man, Thy Grieving Sin Bemoan," transcription by Max Reger; choral and fugue (Albert); Strauss, symphonic poem, "Till Eulenspiegel"; Rouse, Evocation No. 1 (first time); Tchaikowsky, fantasia after Dante, "Francesca da Rimini." Friday afternoon, with Alfred Meserlin, concert master of the orchestra as the soloist, a "Brahms-Tchaikowsky programme" will be given as follows: Brahms, "Tragic" overture, violin concerto; Tchaikowsky, fantasia after Dante, "Francesca da Rimini"; Andante Cantabile, March Slav. Next Sunday marks the beginning of the society's Beethoven festival, which will further include the two concerts on December 16 and 17.

Mme. Luisa Tetrazzini will appear

here for the first time this season at the Hippodrome to-night. Her programme includes the mad scene from "Lucia," "Caro Nome" from "Rigoletto" and the famous air from David's "Perle de Bresil."

Francis Rogers at his annual song recital to-morrow in Aeolian Hall will sing a programme of unusual interest, including several old Italian and French airs. Frank Bibb will be at the piano.

Sergei Radamsky, tenor, will give his first recital here at Aeolian Hall to-morrow night. His list of airs and songs includes three Spanish lyrics from the cycle "Cantares di mi Tierra" of Omsa.

The third concert in the Puertman series in the Newark Armory will feature Mme. Schumann-Heink in a song recital on Wednesday evening, December 15. This will be her last appearance in the metropolitan district before her return from her trip to the Orient, and

will be the second concert she will have given in Newark under the same management in two years.

Percy Grainger, composer-pianist, at his only piano recital in New York this season, on Tuesday at Carnegie Hall, will play music by Bach, Grieg, Mason, Kirchner, Gardiner, Chopin, Albeniz, David Gulon, a Texan composer, and himself.

The Elchuco Trio, at its first concert of the season, on Tuesday evening at Aeolian Hall, will play three works in trio form, Beethoven's in D, opus 70, No. 1; Ravel's in A minor and Schur's in A minor.

The Friends of Music will give their second concert at Carnegie Hall on Wednesday evening. On this occasion the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Oesip Gabrilowitch, conductor, will be heard here for the first time. Mr. Gabrilowitch also will appear as the soloist, playing Mozart's D minor piano concerto. The orchestral numbers will consist of

Weber's "Oberon" overture, Brahms's first symphony and Strauss's "Don Juan."

At the Symphony Concert for Young People next Saturday in Carnegie Hall a Beethoven programme in honor of the 150th anniversary of Beethoven's birth will be given.

Other musical events of the week will be Miss Marguerite Potter's song recital at the Princess Theatre to-day; Kerek-jarto's third violin recital, at Carnegie Hall to-morrow night; Mme. Yvonne Dienne's piano recital, Tuesday, in Aeolian Hall; Miss Nancy Van Kirk's costume recital of Chinese songs, Tuesday, at the Princess Theatre; George Ferguson's song recital, Wednesday, in Aeolian; George Beach's piano recital, on Thursday, in Aeolian; the Misses Rose and Ottilie Suro in a two piano recital, Thursday evening, in Aeolian; Miss Grace Northrup's song recital, Friday, in Aeolian; Lawrence Haynes's song recital, Friday night, in Aeolian;

Miss Aurora La Croix's piano recital, Saturday, in Aeolian, and Boza Oumiroff's song recital, Saturday evening, in Aeolian.

Miss Lydia Lipkowska, Russian prima donna, will give a song recital on Saturday evening at Carnegie Hall. In her list is an air from Rimsky-Korsakov's "Snow Maiden," in which she created the leading role at the Imperial Opera House in Petrograd, with the composer conducting.

Miss Georganna Clavin will be presented by Alfred E. Henderson, of Aeolian Hall at the Princess Theatre on Friday afternoon in a programme including musical monologues.

Mme. Nina Tarasova and Miss Helen Ware will give a joint recital at the Lexington Theatre, Fifty-first street and Lexington avenue, Sunday afternoon, December 5, at 2. Mme. Tarasova will sing three groups of Russian songs. Miss Ware will give a programme of classical and Hungarian music.

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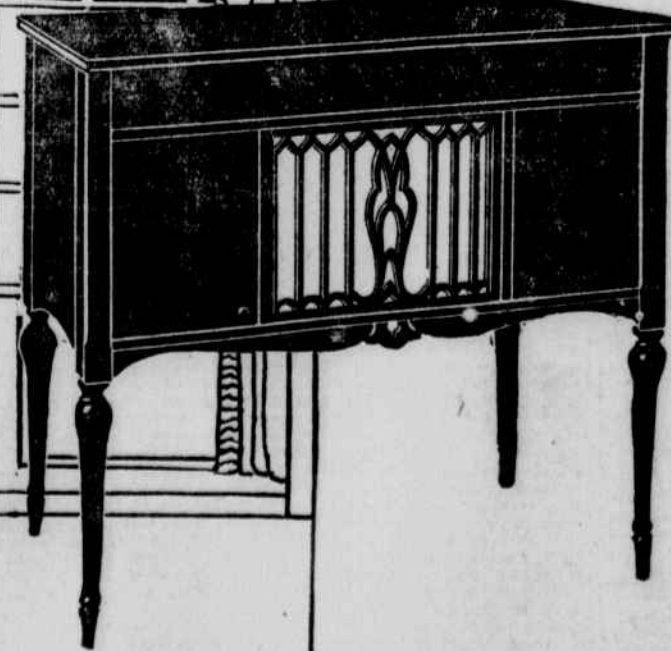
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